

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1587

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, IS, JO
SUBJECT: HONEMOON ON THE WEST BANK--THE MAYORS RESPOND

REF: (A) JERUSALEM 386, (B) JERUSALEM 1556

SUMMARY: THE NEW MILGOV HAS REPEATED HIS SOFT LINE ON
SOCIAL/ECONOMIC AFFAIRS WITH RAMALLAH'S MAYOR WHO SUBSEQUENTLY
MET INFORMALLY WITH THE MAYORS OF NABLUS AND HEBRON.
THE MILGOV BELIEVES THE MAYORS ADOPTED A POLICY OF
COOPERATION AT THAT MEETING. THE MILGOV SPOKESMAN CLAIMS
THE DETENTE REFLECTS BRIG. GENERAL BEN ELIEZER'S
PERSONALITY. WE CONTINUE TO SEE A LARGER HAND. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NEW MILITARY GOVERNOR OF THE WEST BANK, BRIGADIER
GENERAL BINYAMIN BEL-ELIEZER MET WITH THE RAMALLAH CITY
COUNCIL JUNE 6. AS HE HAD DONE PREVIOUSLY IN HEBRON,
BEN-ELIEZER HEARD SYMPATHETICALLY MUNICIPAL DEMANDS AND
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DECIDED AS REPORTED IN THE ARABIC PRESS:
(A) TO APPROVE EXPANSION OF MUNICIPAL CITY LIMITS,
(B) TO PERMIT ESTABLISHMENT OF A TECHNICAL TRAINING
INSTITUTE, SO LONG AS IT IS NOT CONNECTED WITH BIR ZEIT
UNIVERSITY,
(C) TO PERMIT CITY OFFICIALS TO VISIT PRISONERS, AND
(D) TO STUDY THE MAYOR'S REQUEST TO AMEND JORDANIAN

LAW TO PERMIT A MUNICIPAL TAX TO BE USED TO FINANCE SEWER PROJECT.

2. SUBSEQUENTLY, RAMALLAH'S KHALAF AND HEBRON'S QAWASIMA PAID A CALL ON THEIR AILING COUNTERPART IN NABLUS, BASSAM SHAKA'. THE MILGOV SPOKESMAN HAS CONFIRMED TO A CONGEN SOURCE (AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST) THE JERUSALEM POST REPORT JUNE 8 THAT THE THREE MAYORS DECIDED TO ADOPT A POLICY OF COOPERATION WITH BEN-ELIEZER.

3. THE MILGOV SPOKESMAN TOLD OUR SOURCE THAT BEN-ELIEZER'S LIBERAL POLICY OF COOPERATION WITH WEST BANK MAYORS REFLECTS HIS OWN PERSONAL STYLE RATHER THAN A MINISTERIAL POLICY CHANCE. EXPANSION OF CITY LIMITS TO ACCOMMODATE ISRAELI-STYLE INDUSTRIAL ZONES HAS BEEN REQUESTED BY MAYORS OF HEBRON, RAMALLAH, JENIN AND BETHLEHEM, ACCORDING TO THE SPOKESMAN. IN PRINCIPLE, THE NEW MILGOV DOES NOT OPPOSE SUCH REQUESTS, THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

4. COMMENT: SHAKA' HAS YET TO MEET BEN-ELIEZER FOR A PROTRACTED BUSINESS MEETING, BUT THE WAY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SMOOTHED FOR A RAPPROCHEMENT OF SORTS BETWEEN NABLUS AND THE MILGOV. ANY CONCESSION BY THE MILGOV TO SHAKA' WILL BE NOTEWORTHY, THE MORE SO CONFIDENTIAL

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BECAUSE A VIABLE ALTERNATE IN NABLUS EXISTS FOR THE ISRAELIS IN THE AL MASRIS. AGREEMENT ON EXPANSION OF NABLUS ELECTRICAL PLANT WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT. A CHANGE IN JORDANIAN LAW TO GIVE MUNICIPALITIES POWER TO TAX FOR IMPROVED SERVICES WOULD ALSO BE SIGNIFICANT AS IT WOULD BE A STEP (APPARENTLY A WELCOMED ONE) TOWARDS AUTONOMY. WE DISCOUNT THE SPOKESMAN'S CLAIM THAT THE CHANGE IN POLICY REFLECTS BEN-ELIEZER'S STYLE. FROM ALL ACCOUNTS HIS STYLE IS ANYTHING BUT LIBERAL. MOREOVER, HIS DECISIONS ARE IN LINE WITH WEIZMAN'S CONDUCT IN RAMALLAH IN FEBRUARY (REF A). FINALLY, WE NOTE THE EMBASSY'S IMPROVED ACCESS TO BEN-ELIEZER'S SUPERIOR WHICH SUGGESTS THE DECISION HAS BEEN MADE AT THAT LEVEL IF NOT WEIZMAN'S. (TEL AVIV 7189) SOME OBSERVERS THINK THAT A "CHANGE IN STYLE" WHICH PROMOTES AUTONOMY IS EASIER FOR WEST BANKERS TO ACCEPT THAN A MINISTERIAL DECISION. WE BELIEVE THEY'RE PROBABLY RIGHT. DESPITE THE PRESENT AURA OF GOOD FEELING, IT IS WORTH KEEPING IN MIND THAT BEN-ELIEZER CONTINUES TO STRESS THAT HE WILL BE TOUGH ON SECURITY AND EXPECTS WEST BANKER'S COOPERATION IN SECURITY FIELD. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW THE NEXT (INEVITABLE) SECURITY INCIDENTS WILL AFFECT THE CURRENT HONEYMOON.

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